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News Release



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More Time Provided to Submit Information for 5-year Reviews of Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet

For Questions and Answers About Today's Notice go to:
<http://pacific.fws.gov/news/Q&As/5yr-review.pdf>

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service today issued a second request for information pertinent to ongoing 5-year reviews of the status of two threatened birds, the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet, under the Endangered Species Act.

The 5-year reviews, required for all listed species under the Act, will assess the best available information on how the birds have fared since they were listed for protection in the early 1990s, including analyses of population data and threats to the species. The Service is soliciting information from all sources.

"We are announcing this second request to allow the public additional time to provide information for these reviews," said Dave Allen, Regional Director of the Service's Pacific Region. "Reviewing the latest information will ensure a more complete picture of the status of these two species."

The deadline for new information to be received is now August 20, 2003. The initial request for information, issued in April, set a June 20, 2003, deadline. The reviews are scheduled to be completed by April 30, 2004, according to settlement agreement amendments in June with the U.S. District Court in Portland, Oregon.

In conjunction with the extension, the Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking the assistance of a contractor to organize and facilitate teams of external experts to evaluate, synthesize and interpret the best available information for the agency to use in the review. The solicitation for bids is expected to be issued July 25, 2003, and can be obtained at <http://ideasec.nbc.gov>

The 5-year reviews will consider information that has become available since the original listing determination, such as: population and demographic trend data; studies of dispersal and habitat use; genetics and species competition investigations; surveys of habitat amount, quality, and distribution; adequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and management and conservation planning information. The reviews will assess whether new information suggests that the species' populations are increasing, declining or stable; whether existing threats are

increasing, the same, reduced or eliminated; if there are any new threats; and if any new information or analysis calls into question any of the conclusions in the original listing determination.

The Service also will review whether the listing of the Pacific Northwest population of marbled murrelets meets the agency's current policy on Distinct Population Segments. The policy was adopted in 1996, after marbled murrelets in the Pacific Northwest were listed as threatened. The ESA authorizes vertebrate animals to be listed as either species, subspecies or Distinct Population Segments. A Distinct Population Segment is a population that makes up a portion of a species' or subspecies' population or range.

If the Service determines that a change in either species' classification is warranted, the agency may separately propose to reclassify or delist the species. If the agency does propose a change, it would go through a formal rule-making process, including public review and comment, as defined in section 4(a) of the ESA. No change in classification would occur until the completion of that process.

The northern spotted owl was listed in 1990 and the marbled murrelet was listed in 1992. The Northwest Forest Plan, signed in 1994, is a comprehensive strategy for managing 24.4 million acres of Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands that maintains and restores old-growth forests, which these two species depend on, and recognizes their importance to the economy and jobs of the region.

Comprehensive research and monitoring programs for both of these species have been carried out and are ongoing on both Federal and non-Federal (state, private, tribal) lands. As a result, a large body of new information has become available. Although this information has been made public throughout the past decade, and the Service has continued to use the best available data in carrying out its ESA responsibilities, this information has not been evaluated under the ESA's 5-year review process.

The Service has agreed to initiate 5-year reviews of these two species at this time as a result of the settlement of two recent lawsuits: *Western Council of Industrial Workers, et al v. Secretary of the Interior* (regarding the northern spotted owl), and *American Forest Resource Council et al v. Secretary of the Interior* (regarding the marbled murrelet). The settlement agreements were approved April 22, 2003, by the U.S. District Court in Oregon.

The Service is asking that anyone with new scientific or commercial information concerning the status of the northern spotted owl and the marbled murrelet submit it to: Field Office Supervisor, Attention: Owl and Murrelet 5-year Review, Oregon Fish and Wildlife Office, 2600 SE. 98th Avenue, Suite 100, Portland, Oregon 97266. Information on the northern spotted owl may be sent electronically to owl_information@r1.fws.gov Information on marbled murrelets may be sent electronically to murrelet_information@r1.fws.gov

Notice of this review was published in today's *Federal Register*.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses 542 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with

their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

NOTE: This news release and others can be viewed on either the Service's Pacific Regional home page on the Internet at **<http://pacific.fws.gov>** or the National home page at:
<http://www.fws.gov/r9extaff/renews.html>